



Danger and Opportunity

Lee E. Mortenson

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FROM THE EDITOR



Danger and Opportunity

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

Crisis. We have the health care crisis. The health care cost crisis. The trade and economic and budget and Middle East and Eastern European crises. We have the crises caused by the crises. Ugh!

Worse, we all know that old saw, each crisis incorporates both danger and opportunity. True. True. True. But some days we could all use a few less opportunities.

Back when we all lived in the tribal state, there were probably fewer crises, all of them life threatening and intensive. Man and woman didn't have CNN there to tell them about all the other crises going on in neighboring states—the migration of the mastodons, or the flooding from upstream, or the bad crops, which were going to cause the bad guys to cross the border and massacre their village.

Now we all live in the global village. We have the bad luck to understand the true motivations, the true causes that underlie being trampled, washed away, or skewered. Lucky us.

Are you having your crisis today? Would you like to share mine? Some days the retreat to the sub-basement or the old bomb shelter where we could keep our heads down sounds like a real opportunity.

There is a theory about the progression and complexity of life that has been around in public administration for some time. It's called turbulent field theory. It goes something like this.... Back in the old days when life was simple...when the field was new...you used to be able to walk on the field around the few rocks and boulders that were on it with no problem.

As time progresses, and the field matures, you find out that as you walk some of the bigger boulders are also moving, but pretty much in a predictable, straight line. It's not

difficult to stay out of their way.

Time passes. Now there are small boulders and big boulders beginning to move at different speeds and in erratic patterns. As you might imagine, it is pretty nasty out there...and you might want to hop on a boulder for protection. There are obvious benefits to the bigger, slower moving boulders and to some of the smaller, faster boulders. And both have their risks.

Then, things change.

The ground—the field underneath you—begins to move!

So that's what they mean by a turbulent field!

If any of this sounds familiar, let me know. I suspect that it is a metaphor for health care and many other fields. From an area where there were few participants and a relative lack of competition, to the one we are in today, where the ground itself is moving, à la health care reform, and where there are large and small competitors with their concomitant dangers and opportunities.

Associations and their communication vehicles are one mechanism for lowering the danger. Their job can be just to provide information, or they can attempt to affect some portions of the playing field itself. ACCC has grown so rapidly because it has faced these changes and endeavored to realistically prepare for them and to affect the field. Indeed, this issue of *Oncology Issues* reflects a number of changes, all aimed at bringing you more information, more analysis, and keeping you apprised of the initiatives of the association, its member institutions, and state organizations.

My guess is that life will continue to be turbulent for me and for you. After all, it wouldn't be life without a crisis or two. Why should we be left out? Just watch out for that big boulder over there...and that little one coming right at us. ■